

VZCZCXRO6769
RR RUEHQU
DE RUEHPU #0553/01 0991843
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 081843Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8032
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 1877
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 0144
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 1677
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC 1101
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1490

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000553

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR
INL FOR D STOLWORTHY, K BROWN, AND A YOUNG
S/CRS
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KCRM](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES HAITIAN PRISON CONDITIONS
WITH NATIONAL DIRECTOR

PORT AU PR 00000553 001.2 OF 002

¶1. Summary: Ambassador Sanderson met with HNP Director of Prison Administration Celestin on April 4. They discussed current prison conditions, plans for facility construction and renovation, staffing gaps, USG assistance and the major problems facing the Haitian corrections system. He is appreciative of the recent attention and assistance given to the corrections system's needs, as it provides hope for major improvements in the next five years. He also acknowledged the problems faced by the prison system, which are exacerbated by a dysfunctional judicial system. End summary.

¶2. On April 4 Ambassador Sanderson met with the Director of the Haitian National Prison Administration (DAP), Jean Roland Previlon Celestin, to discuss prison conditions, Government of Haiti (GOH) plans for prison construction and staffing, and on-going and future U.S. assistance to the DAP. Director Celestin opened the meeting by thanking the USG for its recent increased support to corrections reforms, particularly the projects to renovate the infirmary, sanitation system and kitchen at the men's prison and by acknowledging the many problems facing the Haitian prison system. Q identified overcrowding, and lack of sanitation, rehabilitation and education as the biggest problems to be addressed.

¶3. The Director addressed a variety of general prison system issues, as well as specific initiatives. He believes that the number of prisoners is very low for the size of the general Haitian population and crime trends and shares the Haitian National Police's (HNP) frustration with early releases and the inability to hold prisoners due to lack of space. He commented that, along with work on the corrections system, judicial reforms are vital to address this issue. He hoped the newly-established Magistrates School may help. Currently over 85% of the prisoners in custody are in pre-trial detention. He noted that Haiti currently violates international standards and human rights in reference to the space per prisoner, at just .67 square meters instead of four square meters, a situation he knows must be addressed. He outlined plans to improve or construct prison facilities outside Port au Prince, including in St. Marc and then in

Gonaives (where the prison was destroyed in 2004). He believes that 90% of facility needs can be addressed in five years, especially now that the international donors and UNDP are more focused on correctional needs.

¶4. Director Celestin stated that the GOH has decided to construct a new prison complex in Morne Cabrit, east of Port au Prince, that will contain separate facilities for men, women, male juveniles and female juveniles. The Ambassador renewed the USG offer of support in addressing conditions at the women's prison or construction of a new facility. She also asked about plans to remodel an unused psychiatric hospital for use as a men's facility and any plans for the male juvenile facility in Delmas 33. The Director confirmed that the Ministry of Finance has been asked to acquire the hospital for that purpose, at which time renovations will move forward. The Ambassador reiterated our offer to assist in that project as well, for which the NAS Corrections Advisor has been instrumental in developing plans. Celestin summarized some of the programs ongoing in the juvenile facility, including the recent inauguration of a small library. (Note: Most of those improvements have been funded and implemented by an affluent Haitian businesswoman who has "adopted" the facility. NAS is currently working to plan a recreation yard and dining hall renovation project there. End Note.)

¶5. Regarding personnel, Celestin discussed the critical need for trained corrections officers, as the current ratio is just one officer per 100 detainees. (Note: Approximately 250 corrections officers will graduate from the National Police Academy in early May - prisons are under the HNP. End note.)

Recruitment has been completed to form a second vetted cadet class. Canada and the U.S. are providing support to those classes. He also stated that officers accused of abuses are referred to the Inspector General and disciplined. For example, one officer is currently serving time for beating a

PORT AU PR 00000553 002.2 OF 002

female prisoner. In addition to improvements in staffing, he has improved provision of food and water and is working to expand health services and hire more qualified health care workers. He acknowledged that there is a problem with the primary DAP medical officer, who has been receiving payment for two full-time positions while devoting very little time to prison health needs.

¶6. On a more philosophical note, Celestin stated that how a country treats its prisoners is an indicator of democracy, and that, to ensure stability, Haiti needs a fair judicial system that incarcerates those who deserve it and deals expeditiously with those who do not. He sees himself and his staff within the prison system as public servants who must serve the people, that human rights must be respected and corruption will not be tolerated. He is proud of his training by the U.S. in 1998 as an HNP officer (his personal rank is Commissar) and he has been working in the DAP since that time. He holds the U.S., Canadian and French prison systems up as the models to strive to emulate in his efforts to modernize Haiti's corrections system and its treatment of detainees.

SANDERSON